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LED street lights could reduce Australia's road toll: international expert

Lives could be saved if LED street lighting is installed on Australian roads, one of the world's leading authorities on road safety economics says.

Dr Rune Elvik is a Senior Research Officer at the Norwegian Institute of Transport Economics and editor and contributing author of the internationally recognised English versions of the *Handbook on Road Safety Measures*. He says road lighting is an effective way of reducing night-time road accidents, **particularly fatal accidents and those involving pedestrians.**

LEDs produce a clear, white light that been shown to **dramatically improve visibility.**

"The benefits [of road lighting] are not necessarily limited to cases where you have a dark road without lighting and then you light it. Safety benefits also occur if you improve the level and standard of lighting," Dr Elvik says.

"Good road lighting greatly improves road safety. This has been found in all traffic environments. We know from a number of studies that if you improve the quality of the lighting you get a reduction in accidents.

"It has also been found to be highly cost effective."

Dr Elvik will speak at the **3rd International Street Lighting and Smart Controls Conference**, presented by IPWEA, March 14-17 in Brisbane.

His research was also pivotal in IPWEA's recently released *Street Lighting and Smart Controls Programme Roadmap,* which provides 15 recommendations on how Australia can fast-track its rollout of LED street lighting and smart controls.

Despite the demonstrated benefits of LED technology – including increased public safety and reductions in energy use that would see councils slash $100 million off their annual street lighting bills – **only 10% of Australia's street lights have been changed over to LEDs.**

Reducing the number of fatalities that occur at night is key to reducing the total number of fatalities that occur on Australian roads. Data from the Bureau of Infrastructure, Transport and Regional Economics (BITRE) shows **between 30 and 50% of all fatalities occur at night.**

In 2016, 1300 people died on Australian roads; up 7.9% from 2015. This has put a speed bump in the national effort to see road fatalities decrease 20% by 2020 and was described by Minister for Infrastructure and Transport Darren Chester as, "a tragedy of national proportions".

Dr Elvik says lighting remains an **underutilised road safety tool.** "As far as we know, it remains underutilised in many countries that are considered leading in road safety, including the Netherlands, Sweden and Norway. In all these countries, it would be cost effective to have more high-quality road lighting than we do today," he explains.

There are also additional benefits to high-quality road lighting, including better mobility and increased confidence for older road users.

"A Norwegian study we did some years ago also indicates that there is a slight increase in the travel speeds and a reduction of travel time, which is an economic benefit to a country" Dr Elvik says.

"Also, the same study indicated that older drivers were less reluctant to drive when the road was lit, so they cancelled fewer trips and were able to take trips that they earlier might not have done, so there's a benefit there. The advantages of LED lighting are so obvious that my prediction would be that in the next few years, we would replace old-fashioned lighting with LED lights."

The 3rd International Street Lighting and Smart Controls Conference will bring together more than 30 expert speakers to inform the discussion on these transformational technologies, with the support of industry event partner Smart Cities Council Australia and New Zealand.

Visit the conference website for more information. To download a copy of the Street Lighting and Smart Controls (SLSC) Roadmap and for more information on IPWEA's SLSC Programme, visit the SLSC portal.

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